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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WAR

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MY intention is not to discuss the causes, economic or political, of the present incomprehensible conflict in which some of the leading nations of the world are each unconsciously committing suicide. Neither do I intend to attempt a justification or condemnation of any of the parties now in arms. I seize this opportunity of trying to convince the public that the forces that move humanity are so deep and so subtle that we are constantly substituting surface and relatively unimportant causes for the deeper and real causes.

Spencer long ago showed that every form of human conduct has its roots and earliest manifestations in primitive man. Even human sympathy, the only force on which the anti-war spirit can safely build, and the only one that has wrought any inner change for real humanism, is not absent in the lowest savages.

However, it is not enough to say that war is founded on human instincts as old as the race. Many then jump to the conclusion that man is hopelessly doomed to war until the Judgment Day. Of course we are, if we properly understand the Judgment Day. Does not every organism struggle to live and to live at any cost? But you say: "Do people really war to live?" Not in this day. This impulse is joined with other impulses. There is an instinct of pugnacity manifested in nearly all people. You explain this in yourself as "righteous indignation." It is all right for us to fight, but never right for our enemy to fight.

Again, can we not trace everywhere the human impulse to excitement, to adventure, to insatiable achievement, to deeds of daring? There is also the instinct of emulation closely allied to the instinct of imitation. Perhaps the early forms of emulation are akin to the powerful forces of envy and jealousy, known to animals and common to all mankind. Race hatred is surely an instinct.

Nearly all individuals and all races have been dominated by the instinct of revenge. Let even a hereditary defective kill some of your friends, and then stand by and watch the course of vengeance. It is still not unlike savage vengeance. The life of the criminal is demanded on the respectable objective grounds of the good of society, but uppermost in the heart of the offended is vengeance. The savages always avenge any wrong done any individual of their group by indiscriminate punishment of the whole tribe. This is war. Later, this

punishment was, as we see in the Bible, limited to the family of the offender. Furthermore, vengeance is one of the most permanent of all feelings. It may last for years, and even be instilled in the coming generation. But the most remarkable thing is the extent to which vengeance passes as justice. Half of our cries for justice on our enemy are nothing but vengeance.

Finally, one more instinct should be mentioned—fear. Fear is the stamp of the coward. But the coward that fears to-day may fight to-morrow, because continued fear is the worse of the two evils. When fear is once turned loose it is cruel beyond measure. When Schiller was analyzing the human heart to find the most ungovernable, the most “don’t care” emotion of man, he pointed out terror as that emotion. Terror is fear gone mad.

The manifestation of these instincts of economic possession, to have and to hold, of pugnacity, of self-elation, of achievement, of imitation, of envy, of jealousy, of race hatred, of fear, of vengeance, cooperating to the same end, through a few million years, have developed habits and customs that carry these forces beyond their aims and continue them in operation even when the grounds for operation have disappeared. When joined with intelligence, the instincts develop the most powerful forces of human society—sentiments of superiority, of egotism, of love and hate, of patriotism, of economic dominance or morals, of honor. Each age or peoples of the same age, who have developed different sentiments, pronounce damnation on all others. Here, and not in the intellect, is the foundation for all the divergent and dogmatic claims about justice, right, human welfare, etc. Such interpretations and claims are chiefly based consciously or unconsciously upon what the individual or nation feels to be of most vital personal interest.

If any one could make a careful diagnosis of all the forces operating in producing the war spirit in the United States to-day, he would find every one of these forces at work on the people of our country, even down to the contradictory absurdity of imitating Germany. We are only dimly conscious of the most powerful forces that move society.

While war is by all odds the dominant rule with savages and primitive peoples, there are those who rarely if ever engage in war. It is also true that there are other instincts, impulses and sentiments that have always been developing in opposition to these forces that make for war. To claim that might, and might alone, makes right is certainly a one-sided view. It is equally wrong to claim that might has nothing to do with making things right. No small part of our international laws have been directly or indirectly dictated by the most powerful. Truth, honor, justice, beneficence and love of mankind have been developed largely through human intelligence, but they are nevertheless founded on fundamental instincts, and most generally their interpre-

tation and application are mixed with all the instincts connected with war.

I in no wise minimize the place of intelligence in the mighty march of what we call civilization, but it has always followed the lines mapped out by instinct, impulse and human sentiments. Why do we not all abandon war? Every form of human intelligence is against it. Why do we not abandon our ancient and barbarous system of treating criminals? Psychological, biological and sociological sciences are against it. Simply because the accumulated forces of opposing instincts and sentiments are not yet strong enough to overcome the massive accumulation on the other side.

Such a well-known authority as McDougall, speaking of Central Borneo, says in his "Social Psychology":

. . . villages and tribes live in a state of chronic warfare: all are kept in constant fear of attack, whole villages are often exterminated. This perpetual warfare seems to be almost wholly and directly due to the uncomplicated operation of the instinct of pugnacity. If one asks of an intelligent chief why he keeps up this senseless practise of going on the warpath, the best reason he can give is that unless he does so, his neighbors will not respect him and his people. How shall we begin to understand the prevalence of such a state of affairs, if we regard man as a rational creature guided only by intelligent self-interest, and if we neglect to take account of his instincts? And it is not among barbarous or savage peoples only that the instinct of pugnacity works in this way. The history of Christendom is largely the history of devastating wars from which few individuals or societies have reaped any immediate benefit, and in the causation of which the instinct of pugnacity has played a leading part. In our own age the same instinct makes of Europe an armed camp occupied by twelve million soldiers, the support of whom is a heavy burden on all the peoples; and we see how, more instantly than ever before, a whole nation may be moved by the combative instinct—a slight to the flag, or an insulting remark in some foreign newspaper, sends a wave of angry emotion sweeping across the country, and two nations are ready to rush into a war that can not fail to be disastrous to both of them. . . . The Germanic tribes were perhaps more pugnacious and possessed of the military virtues in a higher degree than any other people that has existed before or since. They were the most terrible enemies, as Julius Cæsar found; they could never be subdued because they fought, not merely to gain any specific ends, but because they loved fighting.

All history affords evidence of this smouldering war-volcano. Hundreds of individuals said to me on the outbreak of hostilities in Europe: "Is it not awful, foolish, unchristian, and barbarous? Surely we could never do such an irrational thing." Since that time most of these same people have caught the war fever and believe we should take a part in the war. This is simply common psychology. At one time cool intelligence speaks, at another strong feelings. The outbreak of our own Civil War will illustrate this law. The lions of the north and south were fully aroused. Brother was ready to butcher brother in the name of justice and right. Ministers outraged every form of human

intelligence in an effort to justify antagonistic principles and to reconcile religion to war.

Out of primitive savage warfare modern militarism has developed. Until recently political power was inseparable from military power. In early society all adult males were warriors. The army and the community were one. Men had just two ways of getting a living—out of the soil and out of other men. In primitive society, hunting and warring were joined in one occupation. The war chiefs also became the political leaders, and even to-day the two are only partially separated. In many cases, the ruler, knowing the favor and prestige of the military position, makes sure that he is either the head of the army or that he indirectly controls the army. This is true in our own country.

Later, the development of intelligence and fear compelled tribes and nations to some kind of union. Failure in the war usually ended in suspicion and hate among the defeated allies, and victory meant a quarrel over the spoils. When the present struggle ends, you will realize that this law still holds good. But victory also meant some kind of a standing army to guard the possessions. So we have had the constant union of tribes, peoples and nations against others, with the universal development of a standing army.

Everywhere the development of a standing army for defense has sooner or later passed over into offensive operations. Thirty years ago Herbert Spencer pointed out this law with many concrete cases. He says in his "Sociology":

Always a structure assumed for defensive action, available also for offensive action, tends to initiate it. As in Athens the military and naval organization which was developed in coping with a foreign enemy, thereafter began to exercise itself aggressively; as in France the triumphant army of the Republic, formed to resist invasion forthwith became an invader; so is it habitually—so is it now with ourselves. In China, India, Polynesia, Africa, the East Indian Archipelago, reasons, never wanting to the aggressor are given for widening our empire; without force if it may be, and with force if needful.

The causes for this universal tendency are many. A well-organized fighting force always calls for readjustment in other nations, and this in turn creates fear, suspicion, and a demand for enlarging our forces. There is no letting go. Soon suspicion deepens into alliances, these into readiness to strike before it is too late. In the meantime every power of science is being employed to perfect the system of organization. In the eyes of those employed, this military organization becomes the nation. Among the many articles in our magazines, from men of military and naval prominence, how many can you find that do not declare war a necessary evil and tell us that we must not expect it to end or even diminish? How insistent are their demands for increase of army and navy? This is what we know in psychology as the power of apperception. A man who lives constantly in one atmosphere can

only interpret everything through that influence. This is not peculiar to the warrior. It is the same with the minister, with the millionaire who justifies his existence as such, with the Russian who believes his government superior to all others. We blame no one for it. At the present hour the harsh and brutal accusations men are bringing against their brothers would largely cease if only we fully comprehended this principle and its power over human opinions. Is it probable that any officer can escape the conscious and unconscious influences of possible honor, promotion and victory that might result from war? You may minimize it as much as you please; but, if our present type of officers is immune to these and other appeals which would cause them to lead us into war, we have suddenly developed a type of man not mentioned in history.

In how far may envy, jealousy, desire for personal gain, race hatred, vengeance, etc., creep into our interpretations of moral law, moral truth, justice, honor, the weak brother, etc.? In how far do they dictate what peace with honor is? Of course, we are always asking such questions about other people's idea of good and right, honor and justice; but rarely ever apply the same examination to our own. In all such cases, it is alarming to observe how absolutely certain we are that our interpretations are the correct ones. Do we not know that neither prejudice, hate, envy, vengeance nor personal interest of any kind enters into our judgments? I insist that the attitude neither of the millionaire nor the socialist, of the saloon-keeper nor the minister, of the warriors nor the lovers of peace, of the English nor of the Germans, must be interpreted as insincere or hypocritical.

What is defensive warfare? Well, suppose we have a big army and navy. Suppose Japan allows some of our citizens to be murdered over the sea. It is defensive warfare to avenge the wrong? Is it simply active justice that duty compels us to perform, in which neither vengeance, jealousy, nor race hatred takes any part? Or, suppose the people of India begin to groan under the burden of foreign rule, would it not be easy to decide that in the interest of humanity, justice, right and of the weak brother, we should wage a war in defense of their liberty? In such events would not every one of the war impulses and instincts demand a part in our interpretation and application of justice, moral right, benevolence, humanity, honor, weak brother and defensive warfare? The so-called man of practical business affairs may laugh at our psychology and refuse to recognize the power of these things; but that only proves the alarming danger to which we subject ourselves in entering upon the war policy.

To intimate, as Mr. Garrison and other war writers do, that we shall have self-control, that we shall not follow the rule of passing from defensive to offensive preparedness, is to betray our common conceit

and ignorance of human nature. We do not see that present sentiments will gradually give way to others. We do not see how one step calls for another, and yet another. Do we not all boast as to how we should act if we were millionaires? How shall we best find out what we should do under such circumstances? The best way conceivable is to select a thousand or two who have become millionaires and see what the majority have done. We shall, in spite of our honest convictions conceived under present conditions, in all probability act like the people whom we condemn.

It would be difficult to find a more clear-cut contradiction between intelligence and feeling than is presented in our consideration of preparedness. We try to blind ourselves to the fact that such considerations are prompted by all the instincts and feelings that make for war everywhere. The most unreasonable and unlikely fears are everywhere presented as the basis of action. Parallels and analogies of the most absurd kind are evidenced everywhere. Everything is done to array sentiment against intelligence. We cry out: "Look at England and France! See their fate for not being prepared." Are we to infer from this that our military preparedness is to go beyond what theirs was? Prominent public speakers and magazines compare the intended preparedness to our necessity of police and to "guarding against burglars." Suppose other nations so adroitly called us burglars. We should immediately want to defend our honor. Even *The Outlook* goes beyond this and compares it to preparation against fire and to the subjugation of the citizen by the state. One writer compares it to the obedience which a switch produces in children. Are we to be the state with all other nations our obedient subjects? Under the influence of such wild analogies the whole nation may become war-mad.

The fundamental psychological facts are: We have been surprised, and our mental peace has been taken from us by the revelations of a preparedness so far surpassing ours that we do not see ourselves so much of a world power as we had imagined. In spite of our boast of moral strength, we repudiate our Christianity and admit that we must rely more on physical force than on moral power for our "place in the sun." It is an interesting panorama of moral contradictions. We can not see that such evidences of practical righteousness as the repeal of the Panama Canal Tolls Exemption Act will do more to keep us out of war than fifty battleships.

Our pride has been touched, our hate aroused, our jealousy kindled, our imagination set going. We want to be able to strike, not when we are invaded (who would wait so long as that?), but when our trade is interfered with, when any more citizens are killed on the high seas, and to liberate those whom we think outraged by other heartless people. We want our army and navy to speak in the councils of the world.

Six months ago we talked only of defending our coast. Now we are talking of defending the weak brother and protecting our honor. There is not a man in public life who could not go out and shoot some one down on the grounds of an offended honor. All of the warring powers are sincere in believing that they are fighting for justice, honor and self-preservation.

A congressman said to me the other day: "How are we going to defend ourselves when Germany has guns that shoot eighteen miles?" I said: "Suppose we make guns that shoot twenty miles, and she makes guns that shoot thirty miles. Suppose we build ten battleships and she builds as many, are we any better off? Does it not simply mean greater certainty of war and greater destruction when it comes? How is any one nation to know that she is the best prepared? If she did know that, how is she to know what combinations will be made against her? Must we not always expect the weaker ones to combine against the stronger ones?" Alas, the politicians will see none of these things. They are trusting to chance to modify events in the future. They look on at the military conditions in Germany with bitter criticism, but they can never be made to see that the gradual growth of militarism in this country can produce similar strong sentiments for war. They do not see that the very democracy on which they rely to save us from the destiny of other nations owes its perpetuation largely to its freedom from militarism.

They will not listen to such sound psychological advice as President Butler, of Columbia University, was reported as giving in the *New York Times* for October 18, 1914. He says:

It is not each nation's desire for national expression which makes peace impossible; it is the fact that thus far in the world's history such desire has been bound up with militarism.

The nation whose frontier bristles with bayonets and with forts is like the individual with a magazine pistol in his pocket. Both make for murder. Both in their hearts really mean murder.

The world will be better when the nations invite the judgment of their neighbors and are influenced by it.

If war was such a psychological necessity in the evolution of man, why is it not so still? When the whole male population constituted the army, the weak, feeble and cowardly were the ones weeded out. Modern militarism has exactly reversed this process. Our wars leave the race to be replenished from the most unfit. In past times one race or tribe either annihilated or made slaves of the weaker race. Races are no longer exterminated or enslaved. Modern methods of warfare make war absolutely impoverishing to all parties, even to the victors. Suppose the Japs should want to take from us the Hawaiian Islands. How many lives and how much money are they worth? Are they worth a single battleship with a thousand soldiers that may go down

and the heartaches of a thousand mothers? If that is the way we are to value life so late as the twentieth century, we may well hope for Huxley's friendly comet that will wipe this world into non-existence.

The developing instincts and sentiment that were once too weak to oppose war have been steadily gaining ground. This makes conditions quite different from what we find in the early history of men. Nothing has been so much needed to allay hatred and to bring about a proper understanding of conditions as a psychological explanation of conduct in war. Right is a very slippery word, especially when it is applied to the criticism of others or to those whom we dislike. But you say: "Have not agreements made some things wrong and others right?" Yes, the first criminal laws of Pennsylvania made twelve crimes punishable by death, and at the same time England applied the death penalty to over two hundred offenses. How long will the agreement for the state to murder criminals driven by circumstances and heredity to their destiny continue to be right?

I am inclined to think that all our agreements about having a humane war are mistakes; because they delude us into believing that we are civilized and are civilizing war. Such persons should see the humor in the title of an article in *The Forum*—"Thou Shalt Not Kill" in War.

Both history and the study of human nature warrants us in giving as a general law that all the so-called civilized nations will act very similarly in war under similar circumstances. This is not saying that no nation has any moral superiority; but I do mean to say that our moral superiority is by no means what we constantly assume it to be. It would be too painful to cite all the historic proofs that come to mind. How common it is in daily life for us to say: "If I were in such and such a one's place, I should not do so and so." What we really mean is that with our present ideas, judgments and feelings we should do so and so. We do not figure on the changes that would come over us in these changed conditions. So long as the intellect has the right-of-way, the lately acquired forms of conduct and character of individuals and of nations remain comparatively stable. But when the older forms of instinct, custom and passions are aroused these are easily set aside. Only those who have studied history from the standpoint of human feelings, as Le Bon has suggested, can understand what it means to invade an enemy's country with bitter hatred in your heart and with all the brutal instincts that war arouses. Neither do we realize what it means to try to judge where hatred and enmity are involved. There never was a time when men so much needed to apply some psychological analysis to their own opinions, beliefs, condemnations and praise.

Finally, if war has been backed by a network of instincts and sen-

timents, if preparedness only hastens war and more of it, what is the psychological remedy?

1. I have emphasized the fact that from the beginning sympathy, tender emotions, humanitarian feelings, kindness, benevolence, love, truth and justice which is not all vengeance, have been accumulating a force in opposition to the other instincts. Selfish intellect could never establish insane asylums, hospitals, red cross societies, homes for the aged, care for cripples and defectives, and abolish barbarous systems of punishing criminals. It is this altruistic fund of feeling, augmented by every intellectual effort of man, on which we shall build our forts to storm the forts of militarism. It is slow, but the outlook is not discouraging. I admit that the militarists are correct when they say that physical force has always spoken louder than moral force; but I do not admit that it must or will always be true. Why can we not see that it is just that kind of thinking that has kept physical force dominant?

2. How shall this be brought about? The surest avenue that psychology knows is through the education of the people. Several years ago we undertook to educate the people in the dangerous effects of alcohol. The liquor interests were all unconcerned. But now, look at the result. Whenever we speak against war we are called idealists and dreamers. I am not deluded by any idealism. I have presented the cold facts that the war impulses are too strong for intelligence. There is no mathematical axiom truer than this: So long as the majority of the people or of those in authority think we must have war and prepare for it we shall have it. Shall you or shall you not help to keep it going?

But let us not be absurd and attempt to teach peace and militarism in our schools at the same time. The boy that wears a uniform and at the same time receives formal instruction in peace and good will to all mankind will always have enough war impulses surging in him to laugh at such contradictions.

3. Again, we shall move on with our already large and highly perfected organizations for peace even if military writers continue to say these efforts have amounted to nothing. Militarism must be overthrown from without; the masses of the common people must do it; and it must come first from democratic countries. The psychologist does not look for it soon, nor as the result of any convention of those dominated by the war spirit.

Let all the nations abandon their system of trying to rob each other by tariffs. Let the government take all our munition plants and manufacture munitions only for our own use. There is not one man in a thousand who, if he speaks from his heart and not from some council acts, will not say that the only proper neutrality at all times would be to sell munitions to none of the warring nations. Let us cease to as-

sume that nations are going to attack us. The fortunes of war are always staggeringly uncertain. Our military men can give us no more assurance of victory twenty years hence with five times our preparation than they could with just the preparation we now have. Let us cease to think we must fight—as the savage did—that our neighbors may respect us. Let the religionist stop quibbling and outraging his intelligence to find a sanction for war in the teachings of Christ. The Christian should either frankly admit the fallibility of the teachings of Christ or confess that he can not pursue war and at the same time be a follower of Christ.

I may not live to see these things come to pass. But militarism must die or all intelligent thinking men will become discouraged, if not disgusted, with all our boasting about civilization and Christianity. Sympathy, kindness, self-control, peaceable sacrifice must triumph over man's lower instinctive nature. Those who ring the bell should never be discouraged because they can not march in the procession. Be sure it will follow.